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Winter Field Report, December-February 1994-95

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WINTER FIELD REPORT, DECEMBER-FEBRUARY 1994-95

Compiled by

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INTRODUCTION

This was an interesting winter season, with some record late and early dates, rarities, and early arrivals of large numbers of migrants. This information was provided by a dedicated group of observers, who have been patient in understanding the kind of information to report.

First Feb records for Common Loon, first Jan record for Horned Grebe, first wintering record for Western Grebe, record late date for Eared Grebe, first Dec record of Baird's Sandpiper, first Feb record of Winter Wren away from the Missouri valley, and 4th Feb record for Yellow-rumped Warbler, were all notable.

Large numbers of geese, ducks, notably Northern Pintail, and Sandhill Cranes returned early to Rainwater Basin marshes, which were still largely frozen. Lake McConaughy is a staging area for extremely large numbers of Common Mergansers, with about 40,000 there during Dec.

Amazing numbers of Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs were noted in midwinter, but only 5 Snow Buntings could be located.

Winter finches were conspicuous by their absence; Red Crossbills stayed home, no White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls, or Evening Grosbeaks appeared, and Purple Finches and Pine Siskins were not numerous.

Not well known, except by readers of Richard Rosché's 1994 publication "Birds of the Lake McConaughy Area and the North Platte River Valley, Nebraska", is the occurrence in winter of Virginia Rails, Marsh Wrens, and even, once, a King Rail, in the warm water seeps of the Clear Creek Marsh area near Lewellen. Several Virginia Rails were found there in late Dec.

Rarities included the 2nd record of Harris' Hawk, 3rd record of Laughing Gull, an adult gull of the Thayer's/Iceland complex, 2 Clark's Nutcrackers, and Varied Thrush.

ABBREVIATIONS

Initials in parentheses refer to observers; a list follows this report.

* = documented; please refer to Nebraska Bird Review 54:74, 1986 for information about writing documentations, and the Official List of the Birds of Nebraska (NBR 56:86, 1988), which indicates that all those birds whose status is less than Regular, i.e. occurring less often than 9-10 of the last 10 years, should be documented. It is also very important to document very early or very late records of Regular species. The best available reference for such dates is Johnsgard's "A Preliminary List of the Birds of Nebraska and Adjacent Plains States", much of which was published in NBR 48:26 (non-passerines) and NBR 48:46 (passerines). 1980. CBC = Christmas Bird Count; CLNWR = Crescent L NWR; FF = Fontenelle Forest; FWA = Federal Waterfowl Area; L = Lake; LM = Lake McConaughy; NE = Nebraska; NNF = Nebraska National Forest; NPNWR = North Platte NWR; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; R = River; Res = Reservoir; SHP = State Historical Park; SL = Sewage Lagoons; SP = State Park; SRA = State Recreation Area; UNL = University of Nebraska-Lincoln; WMA = Wildlife Management Area; WPA = Waterfowl Production Area.

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

Calliope Hummingbird: The bird previously reported (NBR 62:137) was collected in section 12-27-57 in Sioux Co.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Responding to my request for information on breeding on the Wildcat Hills escarpment in Scotts Bluff Co by certain pine-loving species, Wayne Mollhoff noted that this species was reported breeding in Carter Canyon during the Breeding Bird Atlas Project.

Ovenbird: Jan Johnson pointed out that she did not report the single at Ponca SP I attributed to her 27 Aug 1994. In fact, the bird was there, but was seen by Bill Huser.

Henslow's Sparrow: A follow-up to the report of this species appearing in summer 1994 in Lancaster Co (NBR 62:85,115): a nest was built at the site near Bennet (Jennifer DeLisle fide JGu), more exactly located in section 4-8-8 (JGu). The location near Denton was in section 26-9-5 (JGu).

GAZETTEER

Place names, not listed here, can be located in a road atlas. Counties are in parentheses.

Arbor Day Farm (Otoe Co); Arbor L WMA (Lancaster Co); Bluestem L SRA (Lancaster Co); Bowman L SRA (Sherman Co); Branched Oak SRA (Lancaster Co); Bufflehead WMA (Buffalo Co); Carter Canyon (Scotts Bluff Co); Cedar Point Biological Station (Keith Co); Clear Creek Marsh (Garden Co); Crescent L NWR (Garden Co); Fort Kearny SHP (Kearney Co); Funk Lagoon WPA (Phelps Co); Gavin's Point Dam (Cedar Co); Glenn Cunningham L (Douglas Co); Grandpa's Steakhouse Pond (Buffalo Co); Harlan Co Res (Harlan Co); James Ranch (Sioux Co); Johnson L SRA (Gosper and Dawson Cos); Keystone Diversion Dam (Keith Co); Kingsley Dam (Keith Co); L Maloney Res SRA (Lincoln Co); L McConaughy (Keith Co); L Ogallala (Keith Co); L Minatare SRA (Scotts Bluff Co); Loup Junction WMA (Howard Co); North Lake Basin WMA (Seward Co); North Platte NWR (Scotts Bluff Co); Pawnee L SRA (Lancaster Co); Rainwater Basin (large area of wetlands in sc and se NE w of the Big Blue drainage); Standing Bear L (Douglas Co); Summit Res SRA (Burt Co); Sutherland Res (Lincoln Co); Swan L (Lancaster Co); Two Rivers SRA (Douglas Co); Wagon Train L SRA (Lancaster Co).

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Common Loon: Last were 2 at NPNWR on 1 Dec (LKo), while first in spring were record early on 15 Feb at NPNWR (LKo) and 24 Feb in Cass Co (GWO). These appear to be the first Feb records for NE.

Horned Grebe: The only report was 1 in midwinter at Johnson L SRA on 29 Jan (JoJ), the 1st Jan record for NE.

Eared Grebe: Last were 3 at Swan L on 5 Dec (JoJ), a record late date.

Western Grebe: Last were 2 at NPNWR on 3 Dec (LMA) and, rather easterly, 2 in Lancaster Co the same day (LEi). Probably overwintering, for a 1st such record, were 2 at LM on 5 Feb (SJD). There are no other Jan or Feb records.

American White Pelican: Late birds included 1 over the Odessa bridge 17 Dec (RHa, LRA) and 3 at LM on 22-23 Dec (SJD). At least 1 probably wintered at Sutherland Res, including 5 Feb (SJD); wintering occurred there last year also.

Double-crested Cormorant: Very late were singles at Harlan Co Res on 30 Dec (LRA, RHa) and at Sutherland Res until 24 Dec (JoJ, GJo).

- Great Blue Heron:** At least 6 wintered in the L Ogallala area (SJD,JoJ); none were reported in midwinter away from major river systems. Late were 2 along the Missouri R in Cedar Co on 26 Dec (JJo). Returning birds appear in mid to late Feb; 1 was at Two Rivers SRA on 12 Feb (JoJ) and another in Morrill Co 19 Feb (LMa).
- Trumpeter Swan:** A large group of 10-11 was in the LM area 15 and 29 Jan (LMa,JoJ), and 4 returned to CLNWR on 27 Feb (LMa).
- Greater White-fronted Goose:** Large numbers returned to the Rainwater Basin very early, with 5000 at Funk Lagoon WPA on 4-5 Feb (SJD) and 25 Feb (LRa,RHa). Probably wintering were 9 at Branched Oak SRA on 21 Jan (LEi,WRS). A partial albino was at Grandpa's Steakhouse Pond 22 Jan (LRa,RHa).
- Snow Goose:** This species also returned early in numbers to the Rainwater Basin, where 20,000 were at Funk Lagoon WPA on 5 Feb (SJD,WRS); 10,000 were there 25 Feb (LRa,RHa). Best count in the Missouri valley was only 2200, in Otoe Co 22 Feb (LLF). Last in the w was 1 at NPNWR on 22 Dec (LMa), and in the e 1 at a completely frozen Pawnee L SRA on 24 Dec (LEi). The only midwinter stragglers were 1 at Branched Oak SRA 16 Jan (JoJ) where first spring arrivals were 150 on 18 Feb (LEi), and 4 at Grandpa's Steakhouse Pond 22 Jan (LRa,RHa).
- Ross' Goose:** Unusual in midwinter were 3 at Grandpa's Steakhouse Pond on 22 Jan with the 4 Snows (LRa,RHa). Westerly were 5 at Sutherland Res on 5 Feb with Snows (SJD).
- Canada Goose:** Largest flocks were early migrants in the Rainwater Basin; 40,000 were at Funk Lagoon WPA 4-5 Feb (SJD,WRS). Very large groups winter along the Platte valley, with 20,000 at Sutherland Res 5 Feb (SJD,WRS) and at least as many along I-80 in Kearney Co the same day (SJD,WRS). Largest flocks in the w occurred in Dec, with 11,683 in Scotts Bluff Co 17 Dec (fide AKe).
- Wood Duck:** Very late for the w was 1 in Scotts Bluff Co 13 Dec (LMa). Earliest reported in the e were 2 at Summit Res SRA on 26 Feb (JoJ).
- Green-winged Teal:** Probably wintering were 2 at Two Rivers SRA, seen 16 Jan and 12 Feb (JoJ), 1-6 at Branched Oak SRA 21-24 Jan (LEi,JGu), and 15 at Grandpa's Steakhouse Pond 22 Jan (LRa,RHa). Best count was 72 returnees at NPNWR on 15 Feb (LKo).
- American Black Duck:** None were reported.
- Mallard:** The only large count was an impressive 60,043 at NPNWR on 1 Dec (LKo); 45,000 were there 3 Dec (LMa), but only 407 on 15 Feb (LKo). No large counts were received from the e.
- Northern Pintail:** This species appeared early in large numbers in the Rainwater Basin, where 2500 were at Funk Lagoon WPA 4-5 Feb (SJD,WRS) and 7000 were there 25 Feb (LRa,RHa). Few had appeared by period's end in the w, with only 12 at CLNWR on 27 Feb (LMa); 7 were first at the Gering SL 20 Feb (AKe). Best count in the e was only 50, in Dixon Co 21 Feb (JJo).
- Northern Shoveler:** Midwinter reports included 2 in Scotts Bluff Co on 2 Jan (LMa) and 1 apparently wintering at Two Rivers SRA, seen 16 Jan and 15 Feb (JoJ). No large concentrations were noted.
- Gadwall:** Possibly wintering were 2 in Garden Co 7 Feb (LMa), 32 at Two Rivers SRA 16 Jan (JoJ), and 4 at Branched Oak SRA 16 and 21 Jan (NR,JoJ). A large number rather late were 50 at Gavin's Point Dam 26 Dec (JJo); 23 were there 12 Feb (WRS) and may have wintered.
- American Wigeon:** Uncommon in midwinter, but regular in the Platte valley, 2 were at Sutherland Res 28 Jan (JoJ) and 5 at L Ogallala on 29 Jan (JoJ). A good early count of returnees was 105 at NPNWR on 26 Feb (LMa).

- Canvasback:** Last was 1 at NPNWR on 13 Dec (LMA), while first in spring was at Harlan Co Res 11 Feb (LRA,RHa). Best count was 145 at CLNWR on 27 Feb (LMA).
- Redhead:** Last migrants made up a large group of 100 at L Minatare SRA on 3 Dec (AKE), while first in spring were 4 at Harlan Co Res 11 Feb (LRA,RHa). Very late were 2 on the Missouri R at Nebraska City until 30 Dec (LLF). As many as 500 were at CLNWR by 27 Feb (LMA).
- Ring-necked Duck:** Last was a not particularly hardy bird in Scotts Bluff Co 17 Dec (AKE), while first in spring were 1 in Douglas Co (NR) and 2 in Sarpy Co (NR) on 23 Feb. Best count was 85 at Summit Res SRA on 26 Feb (JoJ).
- Greater Scaup:** The only reports were of 6 wintering in the LM area on 15 Jan (LMA), where a few normally winter, and a migrant in Hamilton Co 28 Feb (JGu).
- Lesser Scaup:** Midwinter reports included 4 at LM on 15 Jan (LMA) and 2 at Bufflehead WMA 23 Jan (LRA,RHa). Last in fall was 1 at Sutherland Res 24 Dec (JoJ,GeJ), and first in spring were 3 at Harlan Co Res 11 Feb (LRA,RHa). Best count was of 375 migrants at Summit Res SRA on 26 Feb (JoJ).
- Oldsquaw:** Only 2 were reported, singles at Bluestem L SRA 5 Dec (JoJ) and at L Ogallala on 28 Jan (JoJ).
- Common Goldeneye:** Best wintering count was a modest 165 at LM on 25 Jan (LMA), while a few wintered at Branched Oak SRA and Pawnee L SRA (LEi). A probable hybrid of this species with Hooded Merganser flocked with goldeneyes on L Ogallala 28 Jan (JoJ); its features were largely intermediate between those of the 2 species.
- Bufflehead:** Last were 2 at Sutherland Res 24 Dec (JoJ,GeJ). Midwinter reports were of 14 at L Ogallala on 28 Jan (JoJ), a good wintering total.
- Hooded Merganser:** Although a cold-tolerant species, only 1 was reported in midwinter, at L Maloney Res SRA on 29 Jan (JoJ). Best counts were 8 on 5 Dec at Wagon Train L SRA (JoJ) and 4 in Scotts Bluff Co 26 Feb (LMA).
- Common Merganser:** An incredible 40,000 were at LM on 23 Dec (SJD); obviously a major staging area for the species. In the w, best count was 3170 at NPNWR on 1 Dec, but only 16 remained 14 Dec (LKO). Perhaps best wintering numbers were at Harlan Co Res, where 8000 were present 30 Dec and a "very large" number was there 11 Feb (LRA,RHa), although no Jan reports were received from Harlan Co Res.
- Ruddy Duck:** Last in fall were 2 at LM 22-23 Dec (SJD,GBr), and first in spring 2 at Standing Bear L 23-24 Feb (NR,JoJ) and 4 at Funk Lagoon WPA 25 Feb (LRA,RHa).
- Bald Eagle:** No large concentrations were noted, especially at Kingsley Dam, where best count received was only 14 birds on 15 Jan (LMA). Elsewhere a roost in Boone Co reached 20 birds, the best yet at the site (WMO).
- Northern Harrier:** Although wintering birds occur in southeast NE regularly, none were noted in sc NE between 27 Dec and 18 Feb (LRA,RHa) and in the w between 6 Dec and 27 Feb (LMA).
- Northern Goshawk:** There were 3 reports; 2, possibly the same bird, were in the L Ogallala area 23 Dec, an ad (SJD,GBr), and 27 Jan, undescribed (JoJ). Another, also undescribed, was in Cass Co 1 Jan (GWO,KDG).
- Harris' Hawk:** If accepted by the NOU Records Committee, 2 sightings of presumably the same bird at Stateline Island (NPNWR) 13 and 27 Jan (LMA) would be the 2nd record for NE, after a specimen collected 28 Oct 1922 in Douglas Co (NBR 45:52). The observer raised the possibility of an escaped bird, but no jesses could be

- seen, and there were other reports during fall and winter of 1994-95 from Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Prior to this winter there have been about 5 late fall and early winter records in Kansas (Birds in Kansas, 1989. Thompson and Ely.).
- Red-tailed Hawk:** A very pale bird in Dixon Co 25 Dec was white except for some buff on neck and tail (JJo).
- Ferruginous Hawk:** Best count was 4 around LM on 15 Jan (LMa). The ne edge of the species' winter range was probably defined this year by sightings in Howard Co 8 Jan, nw Hall Co 18 Feb, and w Kearney Co 17 Dec (LRa,RHa).
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Best midwinter count was 10 in se Dixon Co on 6 Feb (JJo).
- Golden Eagle:** No reports came from the e; most easterly was 1 on the Grand Island CBC 17 Dec (LRa,RHa), while singles were s of Sutherland Res 29 Jan and in n Hitchcock Co the same day (JoJ).
- Prairie Falcon:** As expected, singles were noted e to the Missouri R except for the se, including Dakota Co 26 Jan (JJo) and Lancaster Co 23 Dec (LEi).
- Gray Partridge:** None were reported; this species appears to be at a cyclical low. It would be of interest to define its range currently; any sightings should be reported from outside Cedar, Dixon, Dakota, Wayne, and Thurston Cos. Does it also occur in the Missouri valley in Burt and Washington Cos.?
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Good counts of 100 in Dixon Co 15 Feb (JJo) and 94 at CLNWR on 27 Feb (LMa) indicated a successful winter in those areas.
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Most NE birds occur in the Sandhills, sw through Dundy Co into Colorado, with another group in the extreme se, a northern extension of the Kansas Flint Hills population. Birds apparently from the extreme se edge of the larger population were noted in Franklin Co 10 Dec, when 4 were seen 2 miles n and 1 mile w of Bloomington (LRa,RHa). A good population also occurs in sw Greeley Co, where 30 were found in 2 flocks 2 Jan and 8 Jan (LRa,RHa).
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** More generally distributed over the entire w two-thirds of NE than are prairie-chickens, the only report was of up to 9 birds at CLNWR during the period (LMa).
- Wild Turkey:** Reports were statewide, especially in or near major river valleys, including best counts of 35 near Wynot 26 Dec (JJo) and 25 s of Gering on 12 Jan (AKe).
- Northern Bobwhite:** Populations in the extreme w in Scotts Bluff Co are good; 14 were there 17 Dec (LMa).
- Virginia Rail:** Intriguing, although not unprecedented, was the discovery of at least 7 birds through use of a tape in the Clear Creek Marsh near Lewellen on 22 Dec (SJD,WRS,GBr). Rosché (Birds of the Lake McConaughy Area, 1994) cites records for 6 Jan 1984 and 16 Feb 1982 at a warm water spring in the same area.
- American Coot:** The only midwinter report was 1 n of Scottsbluff 23 Dec (AKe), although 12 at Gavin's Point Dam as late as 26 Dec (JJo) may have wintered, as 10 were counted there 12 Feb (WRS). First in spring were 2 at Funk Lagoon WPA on 25 Feb (LRa,RHa).
- Sandhill Crane:** Perhaps more flocks than usual were seen in midwinter, including 20 se Gibbon on 26 Dec and 90 in n Kearney Co on 15 Jan (LRa,RHa), and 54 s of Alda on 5 Feb (SJD,WRS). Returning birds became numerous by late Feb (LRa,RHa). Unexpected was a single flyover at North Lake Basin WMA on 25 Feb (WRS,NR).
- Killdeer:** Wintering birds included 9 below Keystone Diversion Dam seen 23 Dec and 5 Feb (SJD,WRS) and at least 1 at NPNWR, seen 2 and 6 Jan (LKO,LMa).
- Baird's Sandpiper:** A major surprise, NE's latest ever was with Killdeer below Keystone Diversion Dam 23 Dec (*SJD,*WRS,GBr). It

- was an ad in winter plumage. It was not there 5 Feb (SJD,WRS).
- Laughing Gull:** Apparently only the 3rd record for NE, a 1st winter bird was found at Sutherland Res on 22 Dec (SJD,*WRS,GBR). Details are to be published soon in NBR.
- Bonaparte's Gull:** The last birds were 3 in Kearney Co on 3 Dec (LRa,RHa) and 3 at Swan L on 5 Dec (JoJ). These appear to be the latest NE records.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Best fall count was 1834 at NPNWR 1 Dec (LKO). A few wintered at Branched Oak SRA where 4 were seen 21 Jan (LEi), while 500 were at LM 5 Feb, most probably wintering (WRS).
- California Gull:** The usual wintering population was at LM, the 134 there 23 Dec (SJD) shrinking to 26 on 28 Jan (JoJ) and 21 on 5 Feb (SJD,WRS).
- Herring Gull:** Good midwinter counts were 200 at LM on 28 Jan (JoJ) and 35 at Branched Oak SRA 4 Feb (JoJ), where a few wintered (LEi). A single in Scotts Bluff Co 4 Feb (LMA) may have been wintering.
- Thayer's/Iceland Gull:** An ad gull belonging to this complex was at LM 27 Jan (JoJ) and 5 Feb (SJD,WRS). Current literature (for example Kevin J. Zimmer, Birding 23:254) suggests the conclusion, as indicated by JoJ, that this bird was in fact a "Kumlien's" Iceland Gull; the "charcoal gray primaries with very large spots" (JoJ) and "gray primaries, not much darker than the mantle" (WRS) are suggestive. If indeed Thayer's Gull represents the "dark end" of the cline, it is characterized by "jet-black" primaries (Zimmer). Currently the Thayer's/Kumlien's complex is generally believed to comprise a potential separate species intermediate between Herring and (nominate) Iceland Gull ("Thaylien's" Gull?). If the LM bird was a Thayer's Gull, it is about the 8th NE record, while if an Iceland, it would be about the 6th NE record.
- Glaucous Gull:** Up to 2 ads and 3 imms were at LM 22 Dec through at least 5 Feb (SJD,JoJ,WRS), while 2 each were at Sutherland Res 24 Dec (JoJ) and at Johnson L SRA 29 Jan (JoJ). This species winters in some numbers in the central Platte valley.
- Mourning Dove:** None were reported n and w of Dixon Co, where the last departed 22 Dec (JJo) and Lancaster Co, where 6 apparently wintering at Wyuka Cemetery were seen 4 Feb (LEi).
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** A westerly count was 6 at NPNWR 31 Jan (LKO).
- Barred Owl:** Branched Oak SRA is near the w edge of the range in NE; 1 was there 5 Feb (JoJ). Reports w of here would be of interest.
- Long-eared Owl:** Best count was 6 at Glenn Cunningham L on 25 Dec (JoJ). Others reported were 4 at Harlan Co Res on 4 Feb (SJD,WRS) and 1 at Branched Oak SRA 16 Jan (JoJ).
- Short-eared Owl:** Up to 4 at North Lake Basin WMA on 18-25 Feb (JGu,NR,WRS) were likely migrants, although wintering is possible.
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** The only report was of a dead bird found at Summit Res SRA 26 Dec (JoJ); there are no known consistent locations for wintering birds of this species in NE, although wintering would be expected.
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Wintering birds were checked through the period at Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln (LEi) and in Otoe Co (LLF). None were reported n or w of these areas, although 4 were in FF 11 Feb (NR), possibly early returnees.
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Rare in winter in the extreme se, the only reports were from Cass Co 1 Jan (Gwo,KDG) and Arbor Day Farm on 13 Feb (LLF).
- Northern Flicker:** Individuals of the "Red-shafted" form, or at least intergrades, appear regularly in winter e to the Missouri R. A "hybrid" male was in Dixon Co 23 Dec; it had a red nape, red moustache, and red primary shafts (JJo). A "Red-shafted" was in

- Douglas Co 18 Jan (NR).
- Horned Lark:** While best count in the w was a rather routine 690 in Scotts Bluff Co on 2 Jan (LMa), numbers in the e were staggering. From Garfield to Saunders Cos on 31 Dec, about 11,000 were counted (NR), and "thousands" were in Kearney Co 23 Dec (LRa,RHa) and in w Hall Co 8 Jan (LRa,RHa).
- Blue Jay:** Best count in the w was of 5 in Scotts Bluff Co 2 Jan (LMa), while 18 were noted in Douglas Co 23 Jan (NR).
- Pinyon Jay:** The only report was of 45 at a feeder on James Ranch throughout the period (SLe).
- Clark's Nutcracker:** Following last year's report, 2 birds appeared again in Scotts Bluff Co to be counted on the CBC (Fide AKe). Few details were provided, however.
- Black-billed Magpie:** Easterly birds were 1-2 near Willis 2 and 29 Jan, near the e limit for the species (BFH), and 1 at Branched Oak SRA 5 Feb (JoJ). The species is not known to breed in Lancaster Co, but winter birds have appeared most years recently. On the James Ranch in Sioux Co, 8 first came to feeders 9 Jan, remaining the rest of the period (SLe). Best count in the w was 22 at NPNWR on 27 Jan (LMa). Most southeasterly, but probably within the regular range, were up to 11 in Franklin Co 10 Dec (LRa,RHa).
- American Crow:** Best count was 250 at Branched Oak SRA 20 Dec (LEi); no large concentrations overwintered.
- Black-capped Chickadee:** A large count was the 40 at Loup Junction WMA on 8 Jan (LRa,RHa).
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Carter Canyon holds a good wintering population, as up to 12 were counted there during the period (LMa,AKe). None appeared at a James Ranch feeder until 16 Jan, but remained thereafter (SLe). This species was scarce in the e, with few reported.
- White-breasted Nuthatch:** This species is essentially a winter visitor in Scotts Bluff Co, where 1-2 were reported 15 and 22 Dec and 13 Jan (LMa).
- Brown Creeper:** Wintering birds were restricted to the extreme se, no further n and w than Douglas Co, where 1 was at Towle Park 25 Jan (NR).
- Carolina Wren:** The only reports were from the current breeding range; 1 in a Sarpy Co yard throughout (KCR) and another at Arbor Day Farm 20-22 Dec (LLF).
- Winter Wren:** Totally unexpected were 2 at Cedar Point Biological Station 5 Feb (SJD); Rosché (Birds of the Lake Mc Conaughy Area, 1994) lists only 3 prior records for the area, the latest 16 Dec. All but 1 bird, including the current 2, were seen on dry juniper-covered hillsides (Rosché0). Wintering is virtually restricted to the se, and so 1 nw of Branched Oak Lake 24 Jan (JGu) was unexpected; it had been found there on the Seward CBC (Russ Benedict fide JGu). Another was at Branched Oak SRA 20 Dec (LEi); was it the same bird?
- Marsh Wren:** At least 2 wintered in the seeps at the base of Kingsley Dam; these birds were seen there 23 Dec and 5 Feb (SJD,WRS). A few may winter in the Clear Creek Marsh also, as 2 were there 22 Dec (SJD,WRS,GBr).
- Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Best counts were from the se, as expected, with 10 at Lincoln on 17 Dec (LEi) and 5 a good midwinter count at University of Nebraska-Omaha on 25 Jan (JoJ). Furthest nw were 2 at St Johns Cemetery in Norfolk 17 Dec (JJo).
- Eastern Bluebird:** Few midwinter reports were received: best count was 15 at the Kearney Sewage Treatment Plant on 22 Jan (LRa,RHa), also the westernmost report, while 2 were in ne Buffalo Co on 21 Jan (LRa,RHa) and another was in Cass Co 5 Jan (Gwo,KDG).

- Mountain Bluebird:** First returnees to the breeding area were 15 s of Gering on 22 Feb (AKe). There were no reports of wintering birds, which are regular e to Lincoln Co.
- Townsend's Solitaire:** Easternmost were singles n of St Paul on 8 Jan (LRa,RHa) and near Fort Kearny SHP on 14 Jan (LRa,RHa). This is probably about the e edge of the regular winter range.
- American Robin:** Very few wintered, the best Jan count only 15, at Branched Oak SRA 21 Jan (WRS,SJD). They were "absent all winter" in Dakota Co (BFH). Best count for the period was only 100 at Alma on 11 Feb (LRa,RHa), probably early migrants.
- Varied Thrush:** An imm male was at an Omaha feeder at 2215 122nd Avenue through the period (SJD,NR), for the only report. In recent years about 1 has appeared each year, most often in Omaha.
- Brown Thrasher:** Rather late was 1 in an Omaha yard until 7 Dec (NR). There are several Dec reports from se NE.
- Cedar Waxwing:** Numbers were only moderate, the best count only 150 at Bowman L SRA on 27 Dec (LRa,RHa). None were seen after 30 Dec in Otoe Co (LLF).
- Northern Shrike:** Reports were s and e to Douglas Co, 1 at Glenn Cunningham L on 18 Jan (NR), Lancaster Co, singles 15 and 21 Jan and 4 Feb (LEi), and Franklin Co, 1 near Franklin on 10 Dec (LRa,RHa).
- Loggerhead Shrike:** This species is restricted to extreme se NE in winter; the only reports of 1 in se Otoe Co 12 Feb (LLF) and another at Arbor L WMA 10 Dec (LEi).
- European Starling:** No large concentrations wintered; best count was 450, considered "an especially large flock," at Gibbon on 25 Dec (LRa,RHa).
- Yellow-rumped Warbler:** Unexpected in midwinter and rather westerly for the date was 1 in a yard in Seward 8 and 15 Feb (JGu). There are no confirmed NE reports of wintering, and this is only the 4th Feb record. Such birds should be carefully identified to race, as a 1 Jan 1993 record in Dakota Co was the western race auduboni (NBR 61:94).
- Northern Cardinal:** The 2 pioneers in Scotts Bluff Co persisted through the period (AKe); this is the westernmost known population in NE. Best count was 28 in Douglas Co 28 Jan (NR).
- Rufous-sided Towhee:** The only midwinter reports were of 1 in Douglas Co 2 Feb, not identified to race (NR), and a "spotted" race bird at Harlan Co Res 4 Feb (SJD,WRS).
- American Tree Sparrow:** Best counts were 385 at CLNWR on 27 Feb (LMA) and 300 at Bowman L SRA on 27 Dec (LRa,RHa).
- Song Sparrow:** Wintering birds may occur at any open water; best count was 5 at L Ogallala on 29 Jan (JoJ). Along with 1 at Loup Junction WMA on 8 Jan (LRa,RHa), these were the most northwestward reports.
- White-throated Sparrow:** The only midwinter report was of 2 at a feeder n of Lincoln on 4 Feb (LEi). Two more lingered in an Omaha yard until 31 Dec (NR). None had returned by the end of the period.
- White-crowned Sparrow:** Few were reported. Best counts were only 8, wintering at Branched Oak SRA (LEi), and 5 at Funk Lagoon WPA on 19 Feb (LRa,RHa).
- Harris' Sparrow:** Generally small numbers were reported w to Harlan Co Res, where 7 were seen 11 Feb (LRa,RHa), and n to Madison Co, where 5 were counted 17 Dec (JJo), although a large flock of 50 wintered at Branched Oak SRA, including a partial albino (LEi).
- Dark-eyed Junco:** Juncos were rather numerous this winter, although unexpected were "thousands" 2 miles w of Cotesfield in Howard Co on 8 Jan (LRa,RHa). Best count otherwise was 200 in Otoe Co on 8 Feb (LLF). An interesting, although typical of the area, mix was

- at a James Ranch feeder during the winter: 7 "oregon", 6 "white-winged", and 7 "slate-colored" (SLe).
- Lapland Longspur:** Very large numbers were reported at about the same time large numbers of Horned Larks appeared (see above), although a flock of 3000 in Dixon Co 2 Feb contained no Horned Larks (JJo). About 5000 were near the highways 80-81 junction in York Co on 28 Jan (NR), and 1000, most females and imms, were 2 miles w of Wood River on 4 Dec (LRa, RHa).
- Snow Bunting:** Strangely, this species was virtually unreported, with a mere 5 birds sighted: 1 was in Cass Co 7 Dec (Gwo, KDG), 1 was in Scotts Bluff Co 27 Jan (LMA), 2 were in Harlan Co 4 Feb (SJD), and 1 was in s Dixon Co 12 Feb (WRS).
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Few wintered; largest such group was about 100 in the Branched Oak SRA area (LEi). None were noted between 3 Dec and 25 Feb in extreme ne NE (BFH). Best fall count was a modest 2220 in Scotts Bluff Co on 7 Dec (LMA), and spring migrants first were noted in numbers with "at least" 500 at Summit Res SRA on 26 Feb (JoJ).
- Western Meadowlark:** First singing males were noted in the w in Scotts Bluff Co on 4 Feb (AKe), and in the e at North Lake Basin WMA on 18 Feb (JGu). Best count in midwinter was only 17 in Douglas Co on 2 Feb (NR) (but see Meadowlark, sp.).
- Meadowlark, sp.:** Best count for midwinter was 125 in York Co on 29 Jan (NR), a very good count.
- Rusty Blackbird:** The only report was of 1-4 in Dixon Co on 3-4 Dec (JJo).
- Common Grackle:** The only midwinter report was of 1 at Grandpa's Steakhouse Pond on 28 Jan (LRa, RHa). No others were reported between 31 Dec in Polk Co (NR) and 24 Feb in Cass Co (Gwo, KDG). Overwintering is unusual.
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** Very unusual in midwinter, more so than Common Grackle, were 5 in a mixed blackbird flock at Branched Oak SRA 21 Jan (LEi) and a female in sw Hall Co 5 Feb (RHa, LRa). The only other report was of 1 near Gibbon on 27 Feb (LRa, RHa).
- Purple Finch:** The only reports were from the extreme se; up to 6 were at Arbor Day Farm throughout the winter period (LLF), 8 were in Towle Park in Omaha on 25 Jan (NR), and 1 was in a Bellevue yard 6 Jan (KCR).
- Red Crossbill:** None were reported away from the w panhandle, where 8 were counted on the Scottsbluff CBC (fide AKe) and 1 was in Scotts Bluff Co on 4 Feb (LMA).
- Common Redpoll:** None were reported.
- Pine Siskin:** Numbers were moderate, with best counts only 50 at Branched Oak SRA on 20 Dec (LEi), 40 in Scotts Bluff Co on 17 Dec (LMA), and 40 in Douglas Co on 29 Dec (NR). None appeared in the observer's Otoe Co yard until 25 Jan (LLF).
- American Goldfinch:** Numbers were also moderate for this species, although good counts included 200 near Gibbon on 23 Dec (LRa, RHa) and 100 in Dixon Co on 12 Feb (JJo).

OBSERVERS

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